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SUBJECT: OIC SPECIAL ENVOY STRESSES COLLABORATION AND DEVELOPMENT  
FOR OIC COUNTRIES

SUMMARY

1. (U) U.S. Special Envoy to the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Sada Cumber highlighted the need for better coordination among OIC countries and the importance of economic development in the Muslim world during a recent visit to Bangladesh. Cumber visited the OIC-endowed Islamic University of Technology (IUT), called on government officials and met with civil society leaders. His Bangladeshi interlocutors embraced his message that differences between the Muslim world and the United States were the result of a "clash of ignorance, not a clash of civilizations."

IUT AS A VEHICLE FOR OIC DEVELOPMENT

2. (U) The first U.S. Special Envoy to the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Sada Cumber, kicked off his recent Bangladesh trip by visiting the OIC-endowed Islamic University of Technology (IUT) located just outside Dhaka. The campus is spacious and has good infrastructure, but Cumber noted weaknesses in equipment and materials. In a lively interaction with students and faculty, Cumber emphasized the importance of access to high-quality education as a means for Muslim youth to compete in a modern world.

PROPOSED MOU PRESENTED TO GOB OFFICIALS

3. (U) In meetings at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Ministry of Science and Information and Communications Technology, Cumber presented a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the United States and the OIC that proposes cooperation on education and scientific and technological development. The Government of Bangladesh (GOB) officials showed keen interest in the potential for USG assistance in these areas. Cumber emphasized the MOU and any funding he might be able to leverage would be directed to the OIC; he added, however, that OIC-endowed IUT would be an excellent institution through which to implement some of the MOU's proposals. He urged GOB officials to advocate for the MOU within the OIC and to work with the OIC to strengthen IUT. Cumber promised to raise the issue of IUT's pressing needs with the OIC Secretary General.

4. (SBU) Cumber pressed the MFA hard for recognition of an independent Kosovo. Foreign Secretary Touhid Hossain said Bangladesh supported Kosovo but needed to coordinate its action with other key OIC nations. Hossain encouraged Cumber to seek out Bangladesh's Foreign Affairs Adviser during an upcoming meeting of OIC foreign ministers in Uganda. Cumber outlined his efforts to facilitate travel and immigration issues for Muslims in the United States, including Bangladeshis. He said he was working closely with the Department of Homeland Security to ensure Muslims were treated

with respect and dignity at U.S. ports of entry.

#### CUMBER MEETS COMMUNITY RELIGIOUS LEADERS

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15. (U) Imams from several districts in Bangladesh briefed the Special Envoy on their participation in USAID's Leaders of Influence (LOI) program. Through Bangladesh's Imam Training Academy, the LOI program arranges educational programs to introduce community leaders to key development priorities, including education, health, women's empowerment and crisis management. The program also has hosted exchanges between community leaders in Bangladesh and other countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan. The imams were uniform in their praise for the program; they urged the Special Envoy to tell President Bush the USG should expand the program and arrange more international exchanges, including with Muslim leaders in the United States.

#### CIVIL SOCIETY WELCOMES CUMBER'S MESSAGES

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16. (SBU) At a roundtable at a think tank and at a reception hosted by the Ambassador, Cumber urged Bangladesh to parlay its reputation as a moderate and tolerant nation into a leadership role to promote better understanding between the United States and Muslim nations. Misunderstandings were the result of a "clash of ignorance, not a clash of civilizations," Cumber said. Civil society leaders applauded Cumber's views and welcomed increased engagement between the USG and the OIC. They expressed frustration that the OIC had not become the leading multi-national organization it could - and should - be. They endorsed Cumber's view that the OIC should take a

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renewed interest in the educational and economic development of member nations, agreeing the OIC should be a voice for religious tolerance.

#### COMMENT

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17. (SBU) Special Envoy Cumber's messages resonated in this moderate Muslim nation. Cumber's interlocutors were energized by the Special Envoy's enthusiasm and prospects for U.S. engagement with the OIC. Numerous civil society leaders expressed interest in continuing their discussions with Cumber during upcoming visits to Washington. Embassy Dhaka looks forward to fostering further interaction between Bangladesh and the Special Envoy.

18. (U) Special Envoy Cumber cleared this cable.

Moriarty